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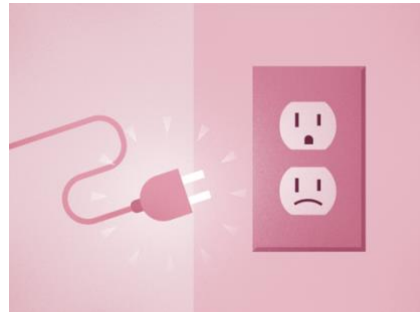
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Missed Connections



Most people would be better off quitting social media.

That's what I believed. So five years ago, for the sake of my own happiness, I decided to get off social media for good. After a decade as a consistent user, I said goodbye to my Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat accounts.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Simultaneously, my three best friends and I had to move. Once inseparable, we were now scattered across the country. I was living in a new state, unable to meet people, and loneliness began sinking in.

That's when I started texting and using Zoom to talk to my best friends every day. At a time when it was hard to find silver linings, I was so grateful for digital media, which helped many of us battle the isolation.

I'm not alone in relying on technology as a lifeline. Many adolescents say they're on social media constantly. This all-consuming use of social media is problematic, especially when it encourages teens to worry about the things they lack.

But during the pandemic, my colleagues and I learned in a study of over 700 adolescents that social media helped some teenagers appreciate what they have. In our study, we found that gratitude and relying on social media for meaningful conversations with friends went hand in hand.¹ What gratitude did not predict was the total time on social media.

In other words, the amount of time spent on social media isn't the only thing that matters. So does *how* teenagers use it.

Don't assume teens' use of social media is always bad or superficial. Banning it entirely cuts off a potential avenue for communication that most of their friends are using, and adolescence is a time in life when connecting with peers is essential.

¹ <https://bit.ly/3oATZMC>

Missed Connections . . . continued

Do encourage young people to reflect on their own values when deciding how to use social media. Ask questions like: “When does it draw out the best in you? How can it bring you closer to your friends?” Take time to talk about the importance of relationships—which are essential to happiness at any age.

With gratitude,

Annie

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The article is from Angela Duckworth’s “Tip of the Week.” Reprinted with permission from the Character Lab, Inc.

A Brief Essay—Communicating More Effectively in a Diverse Community

Recognizing the bias in our thinking and language is key to communicating more effectively in a diverse community. The use of biased language comes from what we have learned at a young age. It has been learned as easily as the language itself and becomes woven into our thought process. There is a popular adage — what can be learned, can be unlearned.

Although there has been a decline in some of the more blatant forms of the language of prejudice such as name calling, omission from the story/the text, and negative adjectives referencing Black and Brown people, it still exists and contributes to intense social conflict and loss of civic unity. The impact is not only on the larger issues of society but also the effect on the minoritized group members often resulting in individuals’ loss of self-esteem, withdrawal from engagement in the learning environment or citizen leadership activity and social withdrawal into one’s own group.

To improve our expressions around our bias and prejudice requires us to make the **unconscious conscious**, and there are several ways we can “unlearn” thoughts and words of prejudice. We can seek experiences that undo the unwanted bias, read literature that opposes certain bias, interact respectfully with people of race and culture who have been a void in our social and professional sphere, make our own list of new, positive descriptive vocabulary to use when describing people of many races and cultures, collect quotes from a diverse group of people to use in one’s written and speaking work. But most of all **self-educate**, for improving self is up to self. Research shows that implicit bias of thought and language is quite malleable, so it is possible to manage and change how we see and can interact more successfully within a community and world that is racially and culturally diverse — if we want to.

“Language is the dwelling place of ideas that do not exist anywhere else. It is a prism through which to see the world.”

—Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potawatomi-Anishinaabe)

By Barbara Shin, Ph.D., Education Equity Consultant and MCC member

Learning Networks

Character.org is establishing learning networks to learn together how to foster and develop character strengths in families, schools, sports and after-school programs, and organizations. Each network will get together four times a year. There are six areas: Parents and Families; Schools and Education; Sports & After-School Programs; Character in the Workplace; International, and; Research on Character. Learn more at <https://character.org/learning-networks/>.

Navigating the Responsible Use of Social Media

Love it or hate it social media is here to stay for now. How can we be responsible users of social media? Below is an excerpted draft for a social media code of ethics that can help us explore the rights and responsibilities of both providers and users of social media. *

Preamble

Social media is a product of post-industrial information technology that builds on two fundamental human "rights" – freedom of the press and freedom of speech, association and assembly. Social media has created a new "public square" for modern civilization.

Social media generally is thought of as a public good, but its ownership is structured on a sliding scale – from genuinely public social media to private media providing public benefits and then private media providing private benefits.



In thinking through a social media code of ethics, several questions need to be weighed:

- At what level of curation do platform providers bear responsibility for their editorial decisions?
- What are the rights and responsibilities of content providers?
- What are the rights and responsibilities of social media audiences?
- What are the rights and responsibilities of cultural and ideological minorities vis-à-vis platform providers?
- What are the rights and responsibilities of platform providers in regimes that infringe on personal rights?

General Principle: Serve the common good by promoting the moral sense of each and all

The business of social media is to attract users who in using the service provided by the business, provide personal data for the business to commodify and sell to commercial firms, along with advertising. The users of social media stand in a stakeholder relationship of supplier to the

business. But the principal stakeholder of social media companies should be the community with a focus on its moral integrity.

All providers and users of social media have a responsibility to care for the common good, in addition to advancing their own private interests. Self-aggrandizement and exploitation of others must yield in principle to faithful concern for the common good and for taking due care in minimizing harm to that common good.

There are, across religions and cultures, three ethical standards for providers and users of social media to uphold: 1) do unto others as you would have them do unto you, so do not presume to judge them, as you would want them not to judge you; 2) seek understanding and trust; and 3) be humble and seek no harm.

Principle 1: Mutuality

Interpersonal communication is a social process. It is the engagement of self with others. Ethics, therefore, applies to communications, as it does to all human self-expressions and other uses of personal power in social settings.

Navigating the Responsible Use of Social Media . . . continued

Principle 2: No anonymity in the exercise of freedom of speech and thought

Social media may not limit freedoms of speech, opinion and thought, but can deny access to social media to anonymous users. Anonymity can draw forth egregious unkindness. Users must identify themselves to providers of social media communications and to the public by name and email address.

Questions about and objections to the accuracy of social media communications shall be directed to the authors of such communications and made publicly available.

Identification of creators imposes on them accountability, encouraging their acceptance of ethical responsibility and respect for others.

Principle 3: Respect

Providers of social media communications must respect those who receive such communications. Authors on social media must respect those who receive their communications. Readers on social media must respect those who express themselves.

Whether or not a personal expression on social media can be said to threaten others or have the potential to intimidate, exclude or silence them depends on the perceptions of whoever is making the judgment. Perceptions are not the truth, as they reflect many idiosyncratic cognitive biases. Perceptions can be false and misleading, not at all correctly understanding the intention of the person making the communication. The ethic of respect demands humility when judging others, giving to them a benefit of the doubt and for a moment, putting aside one's own prejudices before drawing harsh conclusions.

Before posting anything on social media, ask yourself, "How does this help?" Post items which elevate, challenge and encourage people to think.

Principle 4: Fairness in access to social media

Providers of social media platforms stand in the relationship of common carrier to users of their platforms for having market power controlling a gateway for transactions under the rule of *Munn*

v. Illinois (U.S. Supreme Court 1876). Providers of social media, as equitable trustees for the users of their service, may not arbitrarily infringe on the contract rights of their users. Providers, as common carriers, may not use contracts of adhesion to inequitably limit the rights of

their users.

Access to a platform may not be curtailed or denied a user without the provider finding that the user committed a knowing malfeasance or acted with grossly negligent nonfeasance, states of

mind more culpable than ignorance. The platform has the burden of establishing that the user acted from such a culpable state of mind before curtailing or denying access to a user.

**Draft from the Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism. For more information visit www.cauxroundtable.org.*